

Story 2105 (1999 Tape 2)

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kaza, Denizli
Province

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The Kayseri Man¹ and the Jewish² Merchant
of İstanbul

A man from Kayseri once went to İstanbul and bought a quantity of merchandise at a store owned by a Jew. He paid immediately for several of the items he selected, but he requested credit for some further purchases that he made. "I shall send you the rest of the money when the snow melts off Mount Erciyes."³

The Jewish merchant thought, "It is already May, and the snow should be melted off that mountain by June

¹Residents of Kayseri Province are regarded as the shrewdest people in Turkey. In business deals and in other bargainings, Kayserians traditionally outwit and cheat their opponents. There are many folktales about the cleverness of these tricksters.

²To call the İstanbul merchant Jewish is to pin a meaningless label on him. There is not a shred of ethnic or religious evidence that this merchant is Jewish. The narrator calls him Jewish in order to emphasize the shrewdness of the Kayseri man, for there are also many tales about Jews who succeed in besting those with whom they deal.

³Located close to the city of Kayseri, Mount Erciyes is the second tallest peak in Turkey. Only Mount Ararat is higher.

Story 2105

or July, or at the very latest by August. This customer paid in cash for some of his purchases, and in due time he will probably pay for the rest." So he said to the Kayseri man, "Very well, you may pay the rest of your bill when the snow melts from Mount Erciyes." The customer packed up his purchases and departed from İstanbul.

Time passed, and the Jewish merchant kept expecting to hear from the Kayseri man. June came and went, but no money arrived from Kayseri. Throughout July the weather in İstanbul was so hot that residents moved into their summer homes or spent much of their time on the beaches of the city. The merchant thought, "Snow could not remain anywhere in this kind of heat. My money should soon be arriving from Kayseri." But when it hadn't arrived by mid-August, the merchant decided to go to Kayseri himself and collect it from the delinquent customer. "I shall see whether that Kayseri man was lying or whether something has happened to him

When the merchant got off the bus in Kayseri, he spoke to a man on the street. He asked, "Brother, can you tell me where Mount Erciyes is located?"

"That is Mount Erciyes just a little to the north of us," said the man, pointing to the peak.

Story 2105

The merchant saw at once that the upper levels of the mountain were still white. "Alas," he said to himself, "this means that the snow never melts completely from Mount Erciyes. September is approaching, and then more snow will be falling. I had better forget about the money owed to me and return to İstanbul."